Faithful PASTORS Angels of the Churches.

A

SERMON

Preached to the

Bereaved Flock,

March 4. 1739.

On the *Lord's-Day* after the *Funeral*

of the Reverend

Mr. *Peter Thacher*

of *Boſton.* Ætat. 62.

And now *printed* at their Deſire.

By *Benjamin Colman,* D. D.

Revel. ii. 1. *Unto the Angel of the Church of Epheſus, Write theſe things, ſaith He that hath the ſeven Stars in his right Hand, who walketh in the midſt of the ſeven golden Candleſticks.*

BOSTON: Printed by *J. Draper,* for *D. Henchman* and *S. Eliot* in Cornhill. 1739.

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Faithful PASTORS
Angels of the Churches.

A

SERMON

Preached to the

Boston Fleet

March 4. 1722.

On the Lord's Day after the Funeral

of

Mr. [illegible]

BRITISH MUSEUM

And now Annexed to their Desire

By Benjamin Colman, D. D.

BOSTON:

Faithful Paſtors
THE
Angels of the Churches.

REVEL. I. 20.

THE Myſtery of the ſeven Stars which thou ſaweſt in my right Hand, and the ſeven golden Candleſticks: The ſeven Stars are THE ANGELS *of the ſeven Churches, and the ſeven Candleſticks which thou ſaweſt are the ſeven Churches.*

THE beloved Diſciple *John*, who had lain in the Boſom of *Jeſus* in the Days of his Fleſh, was honour'd by Him to out-live the other *Apoſtles*, and to receive his *laſt Revelations* to the Church.

From JESUS CHRIST, the *faithful Witneſs and firſt begotten of the Dead*, he wrote to the *ſeven Churches* which were in *Aſia* by Name; and calls himſelf their *Brother and Companion in Tribulation, and in the Kingdom and Patience of Jeſus Chriſt.*

He

He writes to 'em of *His* Eternal Power and God-head, " *I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the Ending, ſaith the* LORD, *which is and which was and which is to come, the Almighty!* He writes to 'em of his ſecond coming in Glory; " *Behold, He cometh with Clouds, and every Eye ſhall ſee Him, and they alſo which pierced Him, and all Kindreds of the Earth ſhall wail becauſe of Him: Even ſo,* Amen.

St. *John* was now in the *Iſle* called *Patmos*, an *Exile* there and *Priſoner* for *the Teſtimony of Jeſus Chriſt* his Lord; and there on the *Lord's-Day* he was *in the Spirit*, in a ſpiritual Trance, Extaſy or Rapture; and heard behind him a great *Voice* as as of a Trumpet; and turning to ſee the Voice that ſpake to him, he ſaw *ſeven golden Candleſticks*, and in the midſt of them *One like the Son of Man*, his dear Lord and Saviour himſelf,---- but O how chang'd and more than *tranſfigured*, in an ineffable *Glory!* ſo that, inſtead of flying into his bleſſed *Arms* again as in the Days of old, he fell at his *Feet* as dead! For his *Eyes* were as a *Flame of Fire*, and his *Feet* as if they had *burnt* in a Furnace, and his *Voice* was as the Sound of many Waters; and He had in his *right Hand ſeven Stars*, and out of his *Mouth* went a ſharp two-edged *Sword*, and his Countenance was as the *Sun* ſhining in its ſtrength. —— No wonder then if the holy and moſt favoured *Diſciple* was *dazled* and ſtruck *dead* before the ſurpriſing Glory! but the *Lord* laid his *Hand* of Power and Love upon him, which ſuſtain'd and reviv'd him; ſaying to him,——" *Fear not, I am the Firſt and the Laſt! I am he that liveth and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore; Amen, and have the Key of Hades.* Reviving *Word*, which

is

is *Life* from the *Dead* to *You* this Day, *bereaved* of your *Elder Paſtor!* the Lives of all his faithful *Miniſters*, and of all his *Saints*, thro' all his *Churches*, are in the right *Hand* of the *riſen* and living JESUS.

And now my *Text* brings us to the *Myſtery* of the ſeven *Stars*, and of the ſeven golden *Candleſticks*; the Candleſticks are the *Churches*, and the Stars are the *ſhining and burning Lights* ſet up in them; *Miniſters* in the Spirit of the *Baptiſt*, as he came in the Spirit of *Elias*, to give Witneſs unto *Chriſt* the Sun of Righteouſneſs: We preach *Him* the *true Light*; and his *Word* which is *the Light that ſhineth in a dark* World.

Now theſe *Stars*, theſe *Miniſters* of the Word, are called ANGELS, the *Angels of the Churches*; which is to ſay, the *Meſſengers of the Lord of Hoſts* unto them, bringing his *Word* of Truth and Life, *the Light of the Knowledge of the Glory of God in the Face of Jeſus Chriſt*. This *Light* of God in *'em* and on *'em*, which makes them *ſhine* on and give Light to *others*, both makes *'em Stars*, and (what is more than Stars) it makes *'em Angels*.

It is this *laſt Word* only that I ſhall now attempt to *explain* and illuſtrate to You, and ſo the *Myſtery* and *Doctrine* before us is,

DOCTRINE.

"That the qualified faithful *Miniſters* of the Goſpel, and *Paſtors* of the Churches of our LORD JESUS, are in his Sight, and ought to be eſteemed by *us*, as his ANGELS to them.

You

You will ſay, This is a *high Style* indeed! and ſounds much *too high*, if the LORD Himſelf had not given it, for any of the ſinful mortal *Sons of Men*. For what a *Soleciſm* were it to ſpeak of an *infirm* imperfect *Angel*! of a dying or *dead* Angel!——But it is the *Soul* that is the *Angel*, in the Body or out of the Body! And as it is *eaſy* to the Grace of God to make ſome Perſons *Angelical* in this mortal State, ſo if He pleaſe to call them *Angels* in Fleſh, who ſhall preſume to diſallow the *Style*? No *Angel* in Heaven will find fault with it, and no *Man* on Earth may.

Man in his firſt and beſt State was made *lower than Angels*, and but a *little lower*; which is a *Crown of Glory and Honour* put on him, Pſalm viii. 5: but how far is he ſunk below it by his *Sin*? Who ſhall put him again as among the *Celeſtial Spirits*? The *beſt of Saints* that ever have been in the Church of God, (*Abraham*, *Moſes*, *Elias*, *Daniel* or the *Baptiſt*) what a poor kind of *Angels* were the *Holy Men* while in the Body? in *Bodies of Sin and Death*! of like Infirmities and *Paſſions* as other Men! weak and *weary* Angels! diſtemper'd, *diſeaſed* and in Deaths often! ſick, and in *Pain*, and under *ſpiritual* Diſorders and Maladies! Angels that were ſubject to Grief and *Shame* and Fear! with Fleſh about 'em *luſting againſt the Spirit*! *Paul* himſelf was but *ſuch an Angel*! Angels approv'd in *Patience*, Afflictions, Neceſſities and Diſtreſſes!‖ hungry and thirſty and *naked* Angels!

‖ Acts xiv. 15. Jam. v. 17. Rom. vii. 24. Gal. v. 17. 2 Cor. xi 27. Matth. viii, 20.

But

But was not the LORD Himſelf, the Lord of all *Angels*, once in like Circumſtances in our Nature; *Sin* only excepted? The *Angel of the Covenant* Himſelf! the *Angel of Interceſſion*, now before the *Golden Altar*, in the *Holieſt*, preſenting our Prayers, Revel. viii. 3, 4. ——Why then may not *Thoſe* for whom He *died*, and is making Interceſſion, be called by Him *his Angels* in his Church on Earth? tho' they live here repenting and *dying daily*, wreſtling with Fleſh and Blood and *ſpiritual Wickedneſſes*, and thro' Death paſſing to Incorruption.

Yea, that which puts the *Crown* of Angels on them is their *dying well*! the *crowning Victory* is over the *laſt Enemy*! as the *Beggar* died, and *Angels* carried him to *Abraham's Boſom*, to their own *Paradiſe*! and ſo they *buried* the Body of *Moſes*, after (as the *Jews* have been pleas'd to ſay) they had *kiſs'd away* his Soul:—— for He had been an *Angel* of a Man, both in the Sight of *God* and of his *People*, long before.

Yet far would it have been from *Moſes*, or any of the following *Prophets*, *Apoſtles* or *Evangeliſts*, to have taken to Themſelves this *Heavenly Style*, if CHRIST had not put it on them. He is the *Fountain of ſpiritual Honour*, † "HEAD *over all things to the Church*, and makes whom he will *Kings* and *Prieſts* and *Angels unto God*: Nay *this Honour have all the Saints! praiſe ye the Lord.*

It is not to *elate* or puff up; God forbid it! but to *admoniſh* us of our *Duty*, which ever *riſes*

† Eph. i. 22. Revel. i. 6.

with Dignity; what *manner of Perſons*, we may and ought to be, in Heavenly Temper and Converſation, as *Citizens* of the *Sion* above. *Philip.* iii. 20. And if we can but think and ſpeak and live as *Angels* in the Church on Earth, we may leave our *going Spirits* at Death to the Care of real *Angels*, and the *Remains of a Stephen* to *devout Men* to take up (as they lately did your *Thacher's*) and carry to its Grave as *Angel's-duſt!* the Duſt of *Gold*, from the *Candleſtick* in which it once *glitter'd*.

And ſo I return to the MINISTER and PASTOR in ſpecial, as my *Text* requires, and alſo the *ſad Occaſion* of my *viſiting* You, at your Deſire, this *mournful Day*, which my Text would turn into a *joyous* one.

I. *Miniſters* are the *Meſſengers of Chriſt* unto his People, and therefore *Angels of the Churches*. For what is the plain *Engliſh* of the Word ANGEL, but a *Meſſenger*, or One *ſent*? Angels are *Meſſengers* from Heaven to Earth, and ſo are *Prophets*, *Apoſtles* and *Evangeliſts*, *Paſtors* and *Teachers*, the *Meſſengers of the Lord of Hoſts*, Mal. ii. 7. The *Baptiſt* was ſuch an *Angel* of God, of whom we read, * *Behold I ſend my Meſſenger!* Angels deſire to go on ſuch *Miſſions*, even *Gabriel* Himſelf; and he *flew ſwiftly* to *Daniel* and *Zechariah* and the *bleſſed Virgin*, with the *glad Tydings* of Salvation. ||. God's *Miſſion* makes an *Angel of Light*, whomſoever He *ſends*; and the *Meſſenger* is to be received even as *Gabriel* from the Preſence of

* Mal. iii. 1. iv. 5. Mark i. 2. Luke i. 76. vii. 27.
||. Dan. ix. 21. Luke i. 19, 26.

God.

God. An *Eglon* himſelf will own this, who *aroſe* out of his Seat, when *Ehud* ſaid to him, "*I have a Meſſage from God unto thee*, Judges iii. 20. How much more will the *Churches of Chriſt* reverently own his *Miniſters* as his *Angels* to them? Gal. iv. 14. *Ye received me as an Angel of God, even as Jeſus Chriſt.*

And have not *You* had *your Meſſengers*, my *Brethren*, Men of a *thouſand*! was not your deceaſed *Paſtor* ſuch a *Meſſenger* from God unto You? did He not bring you the *Lord's Meſſages* in a ſolemn manner? with the *Gravity* and *Authority* of an Angel! *uſed he any Lightneſs?* Spake he not *as the Oracles* of the GREAT GOD? that was the glorious and *fearful Name* in his Lips, as often as you heard him from the Pulpit; the *Great God!* the *Great God!* and how *greatly* did he pronounce it! ſtriking every One that heard Him with a *ſacred Reverence and Fear!* and this was his Manner from his *Youth*, from his very *firſt* publick ſacred Exerciſes: I think that I never heard the *Name* of God pronounced *Great*, more than in his praying and preaching.—— Accordingly he commanded the *Ears* and *Conſciences* of his Hearers more than many a divine Teacher. He was bold, and took on him *Authority*, in his *Maſter's* Name, Worſhip, Truth and Laws. He could reprove, rebuke and exhort for *his* Will and Glory, in a *vehement* manner, *pathetick* and ſtriking.—— *Joſhua* was ſuch an *Angel* to *Iſrael*, under the Conſcience of the *Charge* given him; "*Only be thou ſtrong and very courageous!* and after his Death came the *Lord* himſelf, in the Form of an *Angel*, reproving the People at *Bochim*: Judges ii. 2. *But ye have not obeyed my Voice, why have ye done this?* Such a *Witneſs*, Leader and *Commander*

der under CHRIST, ſuch a *Meſſenger* from Heaven, was your *Thatcher* to You.

II. *Miniſters* are yet with greater Propriety the *Angels* of the Churches, becauſe ſent *to miniſter unto the Heirs of Salvation.* This is an eminent *Character* of the *Angels* of God, Heb. i. 14. *Are they not miniſtring Spirits, ſent forth to miniſter for them who ſhall be Heirs of Salvation* ? And what, more or leſs than this, is the Office and Work of *Miniſters* ? Acts xvi. 17. *They are the Servants of the Moſt High God, who ſhew us the Way of Salvation.*

Abraham was viſited by the *Lord* and his *Angels* as an *Heir* of Salvation. He *ſojourn'd* on Earth as in a *ſtrange* Land, looking for a *better Country*, which is the *Heavenly.* The *Lord* therefore came *down* from Heaven to his humble *Tent.* He ſent his *Angels* that Day to *ſingle out Lot* in *Sodom*, and ſave his Houſe. Afterward they attended *Jacob* out and home, for he *inherited* the Promiſe; He ſaw 'em on the *Ladder* as he went out, and *Hoſts* of 'em about him on his Return. And all the *little Ones of Chriſt* to this Day have their *Angels* that behold his *Face* on High, and are on the *Wing* to ſerve them for *Jeſus* ſake.

Now, like Love and *Care* for the precious *Souls* committed to them, is the bounden *Duty* and *natural* Temper (thro' Grace) of a *faithful Paſtor.* Such an *Angel* was *Timothy*, of whom ſaid the *Apoſtle*, Philip. ii. 20. *I have no Man like-minded, who will naturally care for your Souls.*

So

So *natural* was the *Care* of *yours* become, thro' Grace, to your dear *Paſtor* *. He *travel'd in Birth to ſee Chriſt formed in You*, and you *born* to God. *As as Nurſe cheriſheth her Children, he was gentle among You.* Becauſe you were *dear* to him, and being *affectionately deſirous* of you, he was willing to have *imparted his own Soul with the Goſpel.* Was it not his viſible Concern that he might *both ſave Himſelf and them that heard him*? And as there is *Joy in Heaven among the Angels of God over one Sinner that repenteth*, ſo was *his Joy* herein fulfilled, if he might *ſave a Soul from Death, and cover a multitude of Sins.* Had the LORD put it to *your Peter*, as he did to the great *Apoſtle* of his Name; "*Loveſt thou me*? and *wilt thou feed my Sheep and Lambs*? he would have anſwered with his Truth, Fear and Fervency; "*Yea Lord! Thou knoweſt all things*, thou knoweſt that I love Thee and them; to miniſter unto Thee for their Salvation.

III. Miniſters ſhould be as Angels for *Light and Knowledge, Underſtanding and Wiſdom*; more eſpecially *in the Myſtery of the Father and of Chriſt.*

"*Wiſe as an Angel of God*, and *Angels of Light*, is the known Language of *Scripture* †. The *Fear of the Lord* is their Wiſdom as well as ours; a *good Underſtanding* have all they that *do his Commandments.* The Knowledge of Angels is *obedi-*

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* Gal. iv. 19. 1 Theſſ. ii. 7, 8. 1 Tim. iv. 16. Luke xv. 7, 10. 1 Pet. iv. 8. John xxi. 17.

† 2 Sam. xiv. 20. 2 Cor. xi. 14. Pſal ciii. ult. Dan. ix. 22.

ential

ential & practical, like that of Saints; they *excel* in hearkning to the Voice of God's *Word*. "*Wiſer than Daniel*, was a *Proverb* among the Nations, while he *lived* & preſided over them, and after his *Deceaſe*; but the Man *Gabriel* was wiſer than *he*; for he came down *to give him Skill and Underſtanding*; and he left ſome more *Rays* of Heavenly Light upon his Mind and Heart.

Miniſters are Angels in being *apt to teach* *; the *Law* is to be ſought from *their Lips*; they need the *Tongues of Angels*, the Tongue of the *Learned*, to ſpeak *in Seaſon to weary Souls*: *Angels* have ſuch Tongues, as *Hagar* found, and anſwer'd ---- "*Thou Lord ſeeſt me!*——The *Urim* always belonged to the *Prieſthood*, and it ſhines *more* and more under the *Goſpel*, toward the *perfect Day*. Heavenly *Knowledge* is the requiſite *Ornament*, and the neceſſary Furniture of a *Goſpel Miniſter*: Ignorance is *Darkneſs* when we ſpeak of *Souls*.

But the *Knowledge* that eminently becomes the *Miniſters of Chriſt*, and makes 'em like the *Angels*, is a clear Underſtanding in the *Myſteries* and *Doctrines* of Salvation by Him. As we read of the *Cherubims of Glory* over the *Mercy-Seat*, with their *Faces bowed* and *Eyes fixed* down upon it: *Exod.* xxv. 17. The *Goſpel* of which we have, 1. Pet. i. 12. "*Which things the Angels deſire to look into*: ſcil. the *manifold Wiſdom* and marvelous *Grace* of God, in *Chriſt's* taking *our Nature* and not theirs. —— The *Miniſter* who has well ſtudied and preach'd the *unſearchable Riches*

* 1 Tim. iii. 2. Mal. ii. 7. Iſai. l. 4. Gen. xvi. 13 Deut. xxxiii. 8.

of

of Chriſt, ſhines as an *Angel* in the Churches. Bleſſed *Paul* was ſuch a *Cherub* of Glory in the Chriſtian Church †: "*I deſire*, ſaid he, *to know nothing among you ſave Jeſus Chriſt and Him crucified*: "*And to make all Men know what is the Fellowſhip of the Myſtery, that hath been hid in God from the Beginning of the World*: and again, "*that your Hearts may be comforted with the Riches of the full Aſſurance of Underſtanding, to the Acknowledgment of the Myſtery of God, and of the Father and Chriſt; in whom are hid all the Treaſures of Wiſdom and Knowledge.*

So Angels *above*, and thoſe *below*, ſtudy and proclaim the Glories of *free Grace* in *Chriſt Jeſus* our Lord. And thus did our Mr. *Thacher*; *You* are Witneſſes and God *alſo*. The *Wiſdom* of God was in Him, he was *wiſe to Salvation*, and to *win Souls*: A *Scribe inſtructed*, and inſtructing others, to the *Kingdom of God*: a *judicious Divine* and ſtrong in the Doctrines of *Grace*; able and ready to *adviſe* and direct Souls in the Way of Life. He could as feelingly as any Man *adore* the diſtinguiſhing Mercy of God in putting him into the *Miniſtry*, and *counting him faithful*: "*That to me, the leaſt of all Saints, this Grace ſhould be given, to preach among you the unſearchable Riches of Chriſt!* Eph. iii. 8. He is gone to join the Multitude of the *Heavenly Hoſt* in that *Doxology*, Luke ii. 14. "*Glory unto God in the Higheſt, on Earth Peace, Good-will towards Men.*

IV. *Miniſters* ſhould be *Angels* for *Purity*, *Sanetity* and *Holineſs*; and for *Zeal* in the Cauſe of

† 1. Cor. ii. 2. Epheſ. iii. 9. Col. ii. 2, 3, 4.

God

GOD and *Godlineſs*; for his *Truths* and *Laws*, *Kingdom* and *Intereſt* on Earth.

Holineſs ſhows the *Angel* more than *all Knowledge*, and ſo it doth the *Miniſter* and *Paſtor* in the Church. Without *this*, has our *Saviour* ſaid, the *Light that is in you is Darkneſs, and how great is that Darkneſs?* Matth. vi 23. Holineſs is moſt of all the Light of *Heaven*; *God* is infinitely *Holy*, *Chriſt* is the *Holy One of God*, and *Angels* are in his *Likeneſs* holy, in all their Worſhip and Obedience. Their *Purity* is without a *Stain*, in high Perfection, and gives 'em their *Glory and Bliſs* for evermore.

The *Style* of the *Angels* of God is taken from their *Sanctity*; and ſo is that of *Miniſters* on Earth †. Even the *Court of Nebuchadnezzar* knew this before the Inſtructions of *Daniel*: "*I ſaw a Holy One come down from Heaven*, ſaid the *King*, relating his *Viſions* on his Bed. But our *Lord Jeſus* has confirmed the *Style* unto us, in that gracious *Promiſe*, "*The Son of Man ſhall come in his Glory, with all his holy Angels.* An *unholy* Angel is a *Devil*. Angels and Saints are repreſented in *white Robes*, and ſuch were of old thoſe of the *Prieſthood*; to ſignify a Profeſſion of and Obligation unto *ſingular Purity* and Holineſs. St. *Paul* teaches the *Miniſter* how to become an *Angel* in the Church; 1 Tim. vi. 11. "*Thou O Man of God, follow after Righteouſneſs, Godlineſs*, &c. And again, "*Be thou an Example of the Believers in Word, in Converſation, in Charity, in Spirit, in Faith, in Purity.*

† Dan iv. 13. Mat. xxv. 31. 1. Tim. iv. 12. 1. Theſ. ii. 10.

Such

Such was your *Thacher* among You, thro' the *Grace* given him from on High. Much of the *Holineſs of Chriſt*, and of *Angelical Sanctity* was in Him. He was a *Watcher* and a *holy One* among us in his *Meaſure*; which was an *Abundance of the Gift of Righteouſneſs*; like *Phineas zealous* for his God, and as *Elias jealous for the Lord of Hoſts*. Like the *Angel* of the Lord, he could have *withſtood Balaam* in his Way; *valiant* for the Truth, and *reſolute* in the Cauſe of Piety.

Angels are called *Seraphims* from their *burning* with holy *Zeal*. Your *Thacher* was ſuch a *Spirit* and *Flame of Fire*, in the Service of his God, and in acting for his Glory. || The *Baptiſt* was ſuch a *Burning Light*, a flaming Miniſter; "O *Generation of Vipers*, who hath *warned you to flee from the Wrath to come? bring forth therefore Fruits meet for Repentance*. *Peter* was another; He *drew* and *ſmote* in the Cauſe of *Chriſt*, till he was bid *to put up his Sword*. *Stephen* ſpake to the *Council* with the *Face* and Ardor of an *Angel*; and *Epaphras* had a *great Zeal* for the *Coloſſians*, labouring *fervently* in Prayer for them. But *He* was *more* than an Angel, of Whom we read, "*the Zeal of thy Houſe hath eaten me up*.

Light and *Heat* go together in *the Kingdom of Nature* and of *Grace*. *Fervour* in the Soul of Man produces *Activity* in his Life, and *that* again cheriſhes and increaſes *Fervour*.

V. *Miniſters* ſhould be like *Angels* for *Spirituality* and a *heavenly Mind*. Such their *Temper*, and

|| Mat. iii. 7. John xviii. 11. Acts vi. 15. Col. iv. 12. John ii. 17.

perpetual *Pleaſure*: their Heart and Work, their Imploy and Joys, all *ſpiritual*. Heaven is therefore their *Dwelling-place* They reſt not Day or Night, ſaying, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty! which art and waſt and art to come, *Revel.*. iv. 8.

So *Miniſters* are to *lead* and *continue* in the *Worſhip* of God with ſacred *Pleaſure*; the *Mouth* of others to God, and of *God* to them, out of the *Abundance* of their Heart to *both*. St. *Paul* was ſuch an *Angel* to the Churches, inceſſant in *Prayers* for them, and in his high *Devotions*; and as a ſingular Reward hereof he was *caught up to Heaven* *; *whether in the Body, or out of it*, he could not tell. *Appollos* was like him, "*mighty in the Scriptures, fervent in Spirit, and teaching diligently the Things of God.*

The *Heavenly* Miniſter lives like *Moſes* in the *Mount*, has *Bread* there which the World knows not of, his *Diet* is on the *Manna* of Angels, *Bread from Heaven*; and his *Meat* and *Drink* ſhould be (in Conformity to *Chriſt* his *Maſter*) to *do the Will of God, and finiſh his Work*. His *Intereſt* is in Heaven, his *Acquaintance* there, his *Heart and Treaſure* there and his *Life is hid with Chriſt in God within the Vail* He would be *accurate* in his Devotions and Obedience, as are the *Angels*; "*doing the Will of God on Earth as it is done above.* He would be *reverend* and *earneſt* in Duty and Service; would find *Wings* to fly, as well as *Feet* to run; "*run and return* as *the Flaſh of Lightning!*

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* 2 Cor. xii. 2, 4. Acts xviii. 25. John iv. 32, 34. Col. iii, 3. Ezek. i. 14. Iſai. xl. 31.

ſo

ſo the *Angels* are repreſented, and from their *Agility* are called *Cherubim.*

Angels in *Fleſh* can't attain this; it is too *wonderful* and *high* for them; they ſoon flag and *tire* in their Work; *even the Youths faint and are weary*, how much more the *Aged* in their Decays? tho' not *weary of it*: Yet is there a *Promiſe* of Angelical Strength and *Vigour* to all that *wait* on the Lord; "*They ſhall renew their Strength, mount up with Wings as Eagles, run and not be weary, walk and not faint.*

How ſpiritual and rais'd was Mr. *Thacher* in his publick *Devotions?* more eſpecially in the Duty of PRAYER! that was his *Gift* and Element! then he breath'd his *native Air!* then his *Aſthma* left him! he *ſoar'd* up as on *Eagles Wings*, and with its *Eye* he could look into the *Light* of the *Throne* of the *Majeſty* in the Heavens! He came *near unto his Seat*, and fill'd his Mouth with *Adorations*: The nearer his *Acceſs* was unto God, the more *awful* was his godly *Fear*, and profound his Reverence! like that of the *Celeſtial Spirits*, Revel. xv. 4 *Who ſhall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify thy Name? for Thou only art holy.*

I ſay again, He was a heavenly Man in *Prayer*: He excell'd in *this*; in a great Copiouſneſs and Solemnity; whether in Adoration, Confeſſion, Supplication, Thankſgiving, Interceſſion, Profeſſion and Pleadings before the *Throne.* He could *wreſtle* like an *Iſrael*, and as a *Principality* in the heavenly Places, having *Power* with God and from Him. How often have you *ſeen* him in this *Desk*, as it were *cover his Face* and cry *Holy, Holy, Holy*, before *the Lord of Hoſts!* many a time mak-

ing your Hearts to *move*, and filling them with a *Smoke* of fragrant *Incenſe*, Iſai. vi. 4.

VI. *Miniſters* as *Angels* of the Churches are to *preſide, rule and govern*, with Meekneſs, Equity, Tenderneſs; Benevolence, Humility and Patience; Wiſdom and Integrity; by the *Rules of the Kingdom*; for the Glory of *Chriſt* and the Good of *Souls*.

Angels are "*Thrones* and *Dominions* and *Powers* under GOD, and us'd by Him, in the *Grand Affairs* of Nations and *Empires*, States and *Provinces*, as we are led to think from the Prophecies of *Daniel* †; and more eſpecially muſt we ſuppoſe their *Miniſtry* in *thoſe* of the *Viſible Church*.

But *leaſt* of all would the *true Miniſters of Chriſt* affect a Reſemblance of the *Heavenly Hierarchy*, in reſpect of *Preheminence*, Authority or Dominion! for "*we have not Dominion over your Faith, but are the Helpers of your Joy*.

Yet *Power* is committed to the *Paſtors* of the *Churches* for their *Order*, Peace, Edification and Purity, for which they can ſhow an ample *Commiſſion*, needleſs to produce before *You*, who have not *ſo learned Chriſt*, as not to remember *Them* that have the *Rule* over You, and *watch for your Souls* and admoniſh you; to *ſubmit your ſelves and obey* them in the Lord; that they may give *their Account with Joy & not with Grief!* Heb. xiii. 7, 17.

He is the *Angel* of a *Miniſter* in the Church of *Chriſt*, Who in the *Love* and *Gentleneſs* of his Lord,

† Daniel x. 13, 20. xii. 1. the

the *Meekneſs of Wiſdom*, behaves gravely, humbly and affectionately in the *Houſe of the Living God, the Pillar and Ground of Truth*, 1 Tim. iii. 15. Who like the *Watcher* from on High is intent on his *Miſſion* and particular *Charge, watching in all things* to make full *Proof of his Miniſtry*; to *prevent* Evil and *Sin* all he can, and *promote* all he can what is *good and holy*.

If St. *Paul* were again in the *Fleſh* juſt ſo would he *rule* and manage; exerciſe no other *Juriſdiction* nor affect any other *Preheminence*, than the holy *Ends* of his Miniſtry, in the *ſaving Effects* of it, make neceſſary to the *Souls* of Men; their *own* and thoſe in *Fellowſhip* with them. And if *He* were again to take *Leave* of the *Flocks* to which he had miniſtred, it would be *ſtill* in the ſame humble and *endearing* Words, with which he *melted the Elders at Epheſus*: Acts xx. 18, &c. "Ye "know how I have been among you at all Sea- "ſons, ſerving the *Lord* with all Humility of "Mind, and have kept back nothing that is pro- "fitable to you; but have ſhewed you publickly "and from Houſe to Houſe, teſtifying unto all "Repentance toward God and Faith toward our "*Lord Jeſus Chriſt*: And now that you are to "ſee my Face no more, I take you to Record this "Day that I am pure from the Blood of all Men; "for I have not ſhunned to declare unto you the "whole Council of God. Take heed therefore "unto your Selves, and unto all the Flock over "which the *Holy Ghoſt* hath made you Biſhops; "to feed the Church of God which He hath "bought with his own Blood. And now *Bre- "thren*, I commend you to God, and to the Word "of his Grace, which is able to build you up,

" and to give you an Inheritance among all them " that are ſanctified.

This is the true *Evangelical*, *Chriſt-like*, *Apoſtolical* and *Angelical* Spirit of Rule and Government in the Churches; the true Chriſtian *Paſtoral Spirit* and Regimen. And juſt thus your *Thacher* deſired to be among You and *over You in the Lord*, and you *eſteemed him highly in Love* herefor, while he return'd the *Bowels of Love* to You and yours for your *Reverend Reſpects* and Kindneſſes to him; You received him always *gladly in the Lord*, as *an Angel of Jeſus Chriſt*.

And now you may be ready to *fall* upon his *Picture* as I hold it before you, and *kiſs* it in your *deep Sorrow*, " *that you muſt ſee his Face no more.* But if this *Face of an Angel* that I have ſhewn You, and you ſee that it is *He himſelf*, will not *dry up* your Tears *for Him*, and turn your Sorrow into *Joy* on *his* Account; tho' it open new *Sluices* for your *Selves* and for your *Children*; you would ſeem *Inſenſible* indeed, and to have no *ſpiritual Senſation* of things joyous or grievous.---- But this is *far* from you: You are *true* Mourners, and many of you I doubt not *ſpiritually* ſo, amidſt abundant Conſolation before the *Lord*.--- I have accordingly expreſs'd my hearty *Sympathy* with you on *both* Accounts; that we may be *edified* together by a *mutual Faith*; as with reſpect unto the *Doctrines of Grace* in general, ſo in the *Application* of them, on the preſent *Bereavement* from God upon you.

And now to go into a more enlarged *Application* of the *Subject*, than the Circumſtances of a *particular Congregation* led me to, I would ſay,

1. Let

1. Let the *Churches* of Chriſt and his *Miniſters* be admoniſhed of that *ſpecial Regard* and Reſpect which they owe unto the *bleſſed Angels*. There is a mutual *Relation* between us and Them, which obliges us to *honour them* as the *Sons of God*, we know not how *far* before us, both in Order of Nature and Time. We ſhould highly *reverence* 'em for all the Graces of God to 'em and in 'em. Let us realize their *Preſence* with us in our holy *Studies*, ſecret *Devotions*, private *Diſcourſes* with Perſons on the Service of their Souls, and in our publick *Aſſemblies*; and let it be an *Argument* with us to be ſerious and ſolemn in all, "*becauſe of the Angels*. Let us deſire to *commend* our Selves to their *Love* and *Aſſiſtance*, in our Meditations, Prayers and Adminiſtrations; and alſo in our Temptations, Afflictions and dying Hours. But however *good* they are in our Sight, yea though they were to bring us even the *Revelations* of God, yet *may we not worſhip 'em*, for they are our *Bretbren* and *Fellow-Servants, that keep the Commandments of God and the Teſtimony of Jeſus*; Rev. xxii. 9.

2. Our *Doctrine* ſhould *comfort*, animate and invigorate *Miniſters* in their Work, and at the ſame time greatly *humble and abaſe* 'em before God and Man.

On the one hand let us *magnify our Office*, and take Pleaſure in our high and *Heavenly Calling*; as when the Hand of the *Angel* touched *Daniel*, it ſet him on his Feet. What a *Name* is this *within God's Houſe and Walls*? called to be *Angels*! a *Name* meet to be *written in Heaven*! And what a *good God* do we ſerve, who *raiſes the poor out of the Duſt*, to ſet them among the *Principalities* and Powers

Powers above, and make them *inherit the Throne of Glory.*

It is to encourage us in our *Work*, and at the ſame Time lead us to *reflect*, how little *meet* we are to *wear* this Name, and how *aſham'd* the bleſſen *Angels* may well be to *own* us, were they not *Good* like *Chriſt* their Lord and ours. —— Compare their *Accompliſhments* and Miniſtrations with *ours*, and how do we indeed *walk as Men*, and below *Angels!* yet " *behold we take upon us to ſpeak to the moſt High God, who are but Duſt and Aſhes!* as *Abraham* ſaid before the *Lord*, in the Day and Hour that his *Angels* had viſited him. The beſt of *Prophets* muſt fall before the *Mercy-Seat*, as *Iſaiah* did, when he had ſeen the *Seraphims* worſhipping with *cover'd* Faces: Iſaiah vi. 5. " *Then ſaid I, Wo is me, for I am undone; becauſe I am a Man of unclean Lips, and I dwell among a People of unclean Lips.*—— " Lord *Jeſus*, ſend " ſome heavenly *Seraph*, with a *Coal* from thy *Al-* " *tar*, to touch my *Heart* and Lips; that my Ini- " quity may be *taken away* and my Sin *purged.*

Ah! were we but thus *humbled*, we ſhould be alſo thereby greatly *quickned* and excited, to *approve* our Selves unto God and his People, as *Angels* in his *Church.* Let us feel this ſacred heavenly *Ambition*, ſince God *calls* us to it. *Aſpire* to walk worthy of the *Vocation.* Let the *Character* of the *Chriſtian Biſhop* make us *emulate* that of *Angels* themſelves: Titus i. 7, 8, 9. *For a Biſhop muſt be blameleſs, as a Steward of God; not ſelf-willed, not ſoon angry, not given to Wine, no Striker, not given to filthy Lucre; but a lover of Hoſpitality, a lover of good Men, ſober, juſt, holy, temperate, holding faſt the faithful Word*, &c. 2. Tim. ii. 24. *And the Servant*

Servant of the Lord must not ſtrive, but be gentle unto all Men, apt to teach, in Meekneſs inſtructing thoſe that oppoſe themſelves, &c. What but the *Idea* of *Michael*, the *Arch-Angel*, ariſes in our *Minds*, upon our reading *theſe Words*? in his "*Contending with the Devil* about the *Body of Moſes*, not daring or *inclining* to bring a *railing Accuſation* againſt him.

O that we could be in any manner as the *Angels of God* for Knowledge, Sanctity, Devotion, Charity, Humility, in every Excellency! whatſoever things are *juſt, pure, lovely and of good Report*; every *Vertue and Praiſe!* more eſpecially in holy *Zeal* and *Activity* in ſerving and praiſing God. Let us in Spirit be daily *aſcending* to the *Son of Man* in Heaven. Let us be in the *Mount* with God often, preparing for the Preſence and *Viſion* of God for evermore. Let us be pleaſant and *joyful* in our Lord's Work. Let us be glad to ſerve the *poor Members of Jeſus Chriſt* in their *bodily* Needs, Sickneſſes and Sorrows, but much more in their *ſpiritual Wants*, Griefs, Fears, Temptations and Diſtreſſes.

Thus *Miniſters* have been *charg'd* before God and his *Elect Angels*, to be *like* 'em here, that they may be *with* them for ever. And could we *realize the Charge* coming from the *Mouth of the Son of Man, in the Midſt of the Golden Candleſticks*, in that tremendous *Glory* wherein *John* ſaw Him in our *Context*, it would ſtrike us *dead at his Feet*. But at leaſt let us be *ſtruck* with *Jacob*'s holy *Dread*, on his ſeeing the *Ladder* from Heaven to Earth, with the *Angels* of God upon it; "*How dreadful is this Place! it is no other than the Houſe of God, and the Gate of Heaven.*

3. As here is great *Honour* put upon the *faithful Miniſters* of Chriſt, and on his *holy Churches*; or rather only on the *Free Grace of God* to 'em and in 'em; ſo what *Condemnation* and *Confuſion* belongs to wicked and *ungodly Miniſters*, and unto *like Profeſſors* in all the Churches of the Saints; who are *earthly, ſenſual, deviliſh*; *Enemies to the Croſs of Chriſt*, and as contrary to *Him* and his *Angels* as *Darkneſs* to *Light*, as *Belial* to the *Heavenly Hoſt*. So, as the *Apoſtle* teaches us, "*Satan himſelf is transformed into an Angel of Light; therefore it is no great thing if his Miniſters alſo be transformed as the Miniſters of Righteouſneſs; whoſe End ſhall be according to their Works*, 2 Cor. xi. 14, 15.

4. Here is a ſingular *Direction*, with a mighty *Motive*, to the *Candidates* for the *Evangelical Miniſtry*; with what *Aims* and *Hopes*, with what *Humility*, *Fear* and *Prayer*, they *ly* at the *Foot* of Grace for the requiſite *Gifts and Graces*, and Endowments from *on High*, to their *ſhining* one Day among the *Angels of the Churches*. Of the *Fulneſs that is in Chriſt* they muſt ſeek *and Grace for Grace!* and "*O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy Name in all the Earth, who haſt ſet thy Glory above the Heavens; and out of the Mouth of Babes and Sucklings ordaineſt Strength!* Pſal. viii. 1, 2.

5. Here is ſpecial Direction unto *Churches* in their *Election* of Perſons into the *Paſtoral Office* over them. May God direct them always unto Such, as they truly hope will moſt *ſhine* in the Gifts and Graces of *Angels* among them; and ever *behave* toward them with Angelical *Holineſs*, *Wiſdom*, *Benevolence* and Care for their *Souls*.

6. And

6. And let a *People ſo favoured of God* ſee how they ought to *receive* and entertain the *Meſſages* bro't them from God by their *Miniſters*: Even as the *Aſian Churches* did, and thoſe of *Galatia*, who *notwithſtanding the Temptations in their Teachers Fleſh* (whatever they were) *deſpis'd them not*, but *accounted* of them and *ſubmitted* themſelves as unto the *Angels* of God. Or if the *Angel viſit you* in your *Tent* or *Field*, as ſometimes *Abraham*, *Gideon*, *Manoah* and *Mary* were graciouſly viſited, receive *Him* gladly as the *Heavenly Viſitors* of old were welcomed, and hearkned to.

7. But what muſt we ſay then unto *Thoſe* who have ſat *long* under the *Miniſtry* of an *Angel*, and their *Hearts* have not been *touched*, *affected*, *enlightned* and ſet a *burning* within them! "*Neither would they be perſwaded* (they ſhould *fear*) *tho' one came from the Dead!* altho' a *Lazarus* were ſent down to them from the *Boſom of Abraham* *.

Your *Paſtors*, as they have *received Mercy*, have not *fainted*; but by *Manifeſtation of the Truth have commended Themſelves to your Conſciences in the Sight of God!* a far more proper *Means*, ordained by God, for your *Converſion* and Salvation, than any *Angels Deſcent* from the *Skies* in a luminous Form. But *if our Goſpel be hid* (as we are awfully *admoniſhed* from God) it is *hid* to them that are *loſt*; in whom the *God of this World* (*Satan*, the *fallen Angel*, the *Angel of the bottomleſs Pit*) has *blinded* their Minds, leſt the *Light* of the glorious Goſpel of *Chriſt*, who is the *Image* of the *Inviſible God* ſhould *ſhine* into them ||.

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* Luke xvi. 31. || 2 Cor. iv. 2, 3, 4.

To draw unto a *Cloſe*,

8. We learn from all that has been ſaid, what a *ſorrowful Senſe* we ought to have of *the Deceaſe of faithful Miniſters and Paſtors*, who have been *Angels of Men* among us.—And therefore learn your preſent *Duty*, O *Flock of Chriſt* bereaved of *ſuch a Paſtor*.

Drop now all the *Duſt*, and bury every Infirmity in the *Grave*, and look only *upwards* after the *aſcended* Angel! All that was *Angelical in Him* and in his *Miniſtry*, let *that live* with you, and *abide* in a pleaſing, thankful, profitable and perpetual Remembrance.

The *Angel* is gone; the *Soul* was that! gone to GOD, who made and remade it! to Whom it has liv'd *devoted* thro' his Power and Grace. It is gone to the *innumerable* Company of *holy Angels*, and is as *one of them* among the *Spirits of juſt Men made perfect*. It is gone to *Abraham*, *Iſaac* and *Jacob*, in the Kingdom of God; gone to be *with Chriſt in Paradiſe*, to behold his Glory and *ſee Him as He is!* and to come *again* with Him, when he ſhall return in *the Glories of the Father*, with *all his holy Angels*. He is gone, whither you *cannot follow Him now*, but we hope many of You will ſoon *hereafter*.

His *Going* is to *quicken* you in a diligent *Preparation*, by following him in *holy Living*, to meet him in the *Joys* of his Lord for ever. --- O what an *Angel* will you ſee *Him* then, and he *You*; his *Joy and Crown of rejoicing!* Are not even *You* to be *this*, in the *Preſence of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt* at his Coming? for *Ye are his Glory and Joy!*

When

When *Christ* Himſelf ſhall preſent *You* and *Him* together, ſaying, or give *him* leave to ſay, "*Behold I, and the Children whom thou haſt given me* †.

Then the *Soul* of the now *deſolate Widow*, truſting in God, ſhall *ſee* the *Angel* of a *Husband* that once was, for *pious* Affection and *ſtrong* Endearment! but O how much more *holy* and *lovely*, in the Image of *Chriſt* perfected on him! to be therefore *embrac'd* again with a *Joy* unknown in our preſent State.

Then the weeping *Relatives*, ſuch as *Mary* and *Martha* were to *Lazarus*, the Family of Faith and Piety which *Jeſus loved*, ſhall ſee their *Brother* alive again, and all Tears ſhall be *wip'd* from their Eyes.

Then the *Friends*, that were as his *own Soul*, and the *dear Collegue-Paſtors*, who were *knit* together in Spirit, as *Jonathan* to *David*, in *Angelic* Bonds; having *united* their Endeavours to *turn many unto Righteouſneſs*, ſhall *ſhine as the Stars* together in the *Firmament* of Glory.

And then all *You* that have ſhown the *Kindneſſes of God* unto the *Deceaſed* for his *Works* ſake, and ſhall do it *ſtill* from Love to *Chriſt* unto the *Half of Him* left below, ſhall hear the *Lord of Glory* take it to Himſelf; "*Ye did it unto Me.*

And finally, Then all the *Elect* of God among You, and *ſanctified in Jeſus Chriſt*, ſhall at length meet in an everlaſting *Sabbath* of Reſt from Sin

† 1 Theſſ ii. 19. Hebrews ii. 13.

and

and Sorrow, in the *General Assembly and Church of the First born, whose Names are written in Heaven*; a *glorious Church* indeed, *not having Spot or Wrinkle or any such thing*; to *serve Him day and night in his Temple* above, and to sing the *New Song* for ever and ever :—— "*Thou art worthy, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy Blood, out of every Kindred and Tongue and People and Nation!* Wherefore *Blessing and Honour and Glory and Power be unto Him that sitteth on the Throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever.*

FINIS.

2 JY 61